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ABSTRACT

This survey audits both current and former open plan school teachers, most of whom support the use of this concept for the majority of pupils. There are some reservations, and changes in teacher training, facilities, and procedures are recommended. (DLG)

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RESEARCH REPORT

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Department of Planning and Evaluation
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A SURVEY OF TEACHERS' OPINIONS REGARDING OPEN AREAS

Introduction

The findings of this study are based upon responses received from:

(a) 93 of the 103 teachers who are teaching in open areas during 1970-71 school year, and

(b) 16 of the 17 former open-area teachers for whom current mailing addresses were available.

The questionnaire and the tally of the responses of present and former open-area teachers appear in Appendices A and B.

High Lights of the Replies

Both present open-area teachers and former open-area teachers gave supportive replies to the following items:

	Of 93 Present Teachers	Of 16 Former Teachers
(a) They had requested an open-area teaching assignment.	56%	69%
(b) They enjoyed open-area teaching.	90%	75%
(c) They would choose an open-area assignment next year if they were given a free choice.	69%	81%
(d) They agree with the idea of open-area teaching.	88%	81%
(e) They usually teach differently with this type of organization.	74%	100%
(f) They were organized for team teaching.	77%	69%
(g) They are usually at ease in the presence of other teachers.	94%	100%
(h) They believe that visitors seldom present a special problem.	67%	63%
(i) They believe that most pupils enjoy working in an open-area room.	92%	88%
(j) They believe that discipline problems in open areas are similar to those in self-contained classrooms.	72%	56%
(k) They believe that parents generally like this type of school.	69%	75%
(l) They believe as much or more learning occurs in open areas as in regular classrooms.	90%	88%

	Of 93 Present Teachers	Of 16 Former Teachers
(m) They believe that open-area instruction provides for better pupil development than the self-contained classroom.	71%	63%
(n) They consider the open-area appropriate to the age of pupils they teach. (See Table I)	75%	75%
(o) They believe that the Intermediate Grades are the most appropriate grades for open-area instruction. (See Table II)	54%	50%
(p) They believe that two or three class groups is the ideal enrollment for an open area.	85%	100%

IN SUMMARY, this survey like the Vancouver survey made in 1969 reveals that most open-area teachers support the concept of open-areas for the majority of pupils.

However, as in 1969, their replies indicate some reservations and the need for modifications in teacher training and in facilities as follows:

	Of 93 Present Teachers	Of 16 Former Teachers
(q) An enclosed area is required for certain classes or lessons.	98%	94%
(r) Classroom equipment is not fully suitable for carrying out their program.	60%	31%
(s) The open-area space is too small.	59%	38%
(t) Teachers work under greater nervous tension in open areas.	63%	88%
(u) Greater time is needed for lesson preparation in this type of organization.	80%	94%
(v) Their preparatory training for open-area teaching was insufficient.	68%	81%
(w) In-service training for teachers in open areas is insufficient.	76%	75%

In answer to question 28, where individual supportive responses were invited, teachers listed the following advantages of open-area classrooms:

	Of 93 Present Teachers	Of 16 Former Teachers
(1) They facilitate team teaching.	82	15
(2) They encourage children to be independent and innovative.	60	8
(3) They provide more social interaction among pupils and teachers.	29	6
(4) They permit flexible grouping of pupils.	27	2
(5) They provide stimulating learning environments.	23	2
(6) They provide a variety of classroom resources.	22	10
(7) They facilitate the individualization of classroom instruction.	16	-

In answer to question 29, where critical responses were invited, individual teachers listed the following disadvantages of open-area classrooms:

	Of 93 Present Teachers	Of 16 Former Teachers
(1) Classroom facilities and equipment are inadequate in some schools.	44	9
(2) There is distracting noise in the open-area classroom.	42	9
(3) Teachers often make compromises in lessons to avoid disturbing other open-area classes.	25	-
(4) Immature children are unable to cope with an open-area situation.	23	7
(5) Some open-area teams have had incompatible members.	19	4
(6) There is inadequate planning time.	19	6
(7) It is more difficult to detect children who need assistance.	15	1

In answer to question 30, teachers made the following suggestions for the improvement of open areas:

	Of 93 Present Teachers	Of 16 Former Teachers
(1) Improve the physical facilities and equipment.	86	7
(2) Assign compatible teachers to teams.	26	9
(3) Provide more preparation time for planning lessons.	15	-
(4) Provide more information on organizing open-area classrooms.	15	4
(5) Reduce the pupil enrollment for open-area classrooms.	14	2
(6) Screen out pupils who are unsuitable for open-area classrooms.	11	-
(7) Provide improved in-service training programs for open-area teachers.	11	7
(8) Provide more full-time qualified aides.	11	5

TABLES I AND II

An analysis, by grade level, of the responses of teachers to questions 18 and 19 inclusive shows in Tables I and II:

While 93% of present intermediate grade teachers teaching in open areas believe they are appropriate to their grade only 68% of present primary grade teachers hold this belief for their grade level.

One half the primary teachers believe open areas are most appropriate for intermediate grades.

In a few instances the total number of responses differs from the number of respondents because all teachers did not answer all questions and certain questions permitted more than one response.

TABLE I: APPROPRIATENESS OF OPEN-AREA FOR PUPILS IN KINDERGARTEN, PRIMARY GRADES AND INTERMEDIATE GRADES

Appropriateness of Open-Area For Pupils of Teacher Respondents	Responses of Current Teachers in Open-Area Classrooms			Responses of Former Teachers in Open-Area Classrooms	Total Responses
	Kindergarten Teachers	Primary Teachers (Grades 1-3)	Intermediate Teachers (Grades 4-7)		
Yes	1	40	28	12	81 (75%)
No	1	19	1	4	25 (23%)
No Answer	1	0	1	0	2 (2%)
Totals	3	59	30	16	108 (100%)

TABLE II: GRADE LEVEL WHERE OPEN-AREA IS MOST APPROPRIATE

Grade Level	Responses* of Current Teachers In Open-Area Classrooms			Responses* of Former Teachers In Open-Area Classrooms	Total Responses
	Kindergarten Teachers	Primary Teachers (Grades 1-3)	Intermediate Teachers (Grades 4-7)		
Kindergarten	1	11	6	3	21 (13%)
Primary	3	30	11	8	52 (33%)
Intermediate	2	46	26	11	85 (54%)
Total Response	6	87	43	22	158 (100%)

* Some teachers indicated more than one grade level on their questionnaires.

DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH
AND SPECIAL SERVICES

BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES
OF SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 39 (VANCOUVER)

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VANCOUVER 9, B.C.
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APPENDIX "A"

January 29, 1971

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS IN OPEN-AREA CLASSROOMS

To assist us in educational planning we are again asking those teaching in open areas to give their candid opinions of this type of accommodation and instruction. Your responses will remain completely anonymous and confidential.

Would you please complete the following questionnaire on your own, seal it in the accompanying envelope, and return it to your school office for forwarding.

Thank you for your cooperation in this study.

D.L. PRITCHARD, Director
Department of Research and Special Services

No. of Questionnaires Sent 103
No. of Questionnaires Received 93 (90% return)

Please enter a check mark in the appropriate space following each question.

1. In what grades do you teach?

   Kdg. 3 1-3 45 4-7 30 Other Grade Combinations 14

2. What is your teaching experience in open areas?

   Less than 1 year 8 1 year 36 2 years 31 3 years 12 4 years 4
   5 or more years -

3. What is your total teaching experience?

   Less than 1 year 2 1 year 13 2 years 13 3 years 11 4 years 10
   5 or more years 42

4. Did you ask to be assigned to this type of work? Yes 52 No 40

5. Do you enjoy this type of teaching? Yes 84 No 11

6. If you had a free choice of your situation next year would you choose an open-area teaching assignment? Yes 64 No 24

7. Do you agree with the idea of open-area teaching? Yes 82 No 4

8. Do you now teach differently than you did in the regular classroom?

   Always 2 Usually 42 Sometimes 22 Seldom 3 Never 1

   Not applicable, I have not taught in a regular classroom 19

9. Are teachers in your area organized for team teaching? Yes 72 No 20

10. For what percent of their time do pupils in your area work in regular class groups? Range = 0-100% Mean = 42.7%

11. Are you at ease teaching with other teachers present?

    Always 43 Usually 44 Sometimes 5 Seldom - Never -

12. Do visitors to your open area present a special problem to you?

    Always 1 Usually 3 Sometimes 25 Seldom 44 Never 18

13. In your opinion, do most of your pupils enjoy working in an open area? Yes 86 No 6

14. What is the effect of the open area on discipline problems?

    More problems 19 About the same 46 Fewer problems 21

15. Do you think that most parents like this type of school? Yes 64 No 10

16. In your opinion, what is the effect of the open area on pupil learning?

    More 39 About the same 44 Less 1

17. In your opinion does open-area instruction provide for better pupil development than the self-contained classroom? Yes 66 No 18

18. Do you consider the open-area appropriate to the age of the pupils you teach? Yes 69 No 21

19. At what level do you believe it most appropriate?

    Kindergarten 18 Primary 44 Intermediate 74

20. How many roll-classes do you think should ideally be enrolled in an open area? 2. 36 3. 43 4 25 5. -

21. Do you think that an enclosed area is needed for certain classes or for certain lessons? Yes 91 No -

22. How suitable is the equipment in your area for carrying out your program?

Very suitable 36 Partly suitable 51 Not suitable 5

23. How adequate is the space provided for the activities you wish to carry on in the open area?

Too large - Just right 35 Too small 55

24. As compared to a regular self-contained classroom, what amount of nervous tension is placed upon teachers in open areas?

Greater 59 Same 11 Less 6 Not Applicable 13

25. Is greater time needed for the preparation of your work? Yes 74 No 15

26. Do you believe that you received sufficient preparatory training for your work in an open-area school? Yes 23 No 63

27. Is sufficient "in-service" training available to teachers in open areas? Yes 11 No 71

What type of "in-service" training have you found most useful? 1. Visiting and observing teachers in other open-area classrooms (25)
2. Sharing ideas and materials at meetings for teachers (16)
3. Demonstration workshops in subject areas and organizational methods (13)

28. Please list what you believe to be "plus-values" (benefits, advantages, strengths, good features) of open areas.

For summary of replies see Page 3 of the report.

29. Please list what you believe to be "minus-values" (limitations, disadvantages, weaknesses, poor features) of open areas.

For summary of replies see Page 3 of the report.

30. Please record any suggestions you may have for the improvement of open areas.

For summary of replies see Page 4 of the report. 11

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APPENDIX "B" February 23, 1971

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS WHO FORMERLY TAUGHT IN OPEN-AREA CLASSROOMS

To assist us in educational planning we are again asking those who have taught in open areas to give their candid opinions of this type of accommodation and instruction. Your responses will remain completely anonymous and confidential.

Would you please complete the following questionnaire on your own, seal it in the accompanying envelope, and return it to this office.

Thank you for your cooperation in this study.

D.L. PRITCHARD, Director
Department of Research and Special Services

No. of Questionnaires Sent 17
No. of Questionnaires Received 16 (94% return)

Please enter a check mark in the appropriate space following each question.

1. In what grades did you teach? Kdg. - 1-3 10 4-7 8

2. What is your teaching experience in open areas?

   Less than 1 year 1 1 year 10 2 years 2 3 years 3 4 years -
   5 or more years -

3. What is your total teaching experience?

   1 year 2 2 years - 3 years 2 4 years 3 5 or more years 10

4. Did you ask to be assigned to this type of work? Yes 11 No 5

5. Did you enjoy this type of teaching? Yes 12 No 7

6. If you had a free choice of your situation next year would you choose an open-area teaching assignment? Yes 13 No 4

7. Do you agree with the idea of open-area teaching? Yes 13 No 4

8. Did you teach differently than in the regular classroom?

   Always 1 Usually 8 Sometimes 6 Seldom 1 Never -
   Not applicable, I have not taught in a regular classroom -

9. Were teachers in your area organized for team teaching? Yes 11 No 5

10. For what percent of their time did pupils in your area work in regular class groups? Range = 10-100% Mean =50.4%

11. Were you at ease teaching with other teachers present?

Always 7 Usually 9 Sometimes - Seldom - Never -

12. Did visitors to your open area present a special problem to you?

Always 1 Usually 2 Sometimes 3 Seldom 7 Never 3

13. In your opinion did most of your pupils enjoy working in an open area? Yes 14 No 2

14. What was the effect of the open area on discipline problems?

More problems 6 About the same 6 Fewer problems 3

15. Do you think that most parents like this type of school? Yes 10 No 7

16. In your opinion, what is the effect of the open area on pupil learning?

More 7 About the same 7 Less 1

17. In your opinion does open-area instruction provide for better pupil development than the self-contained classroom? Yes 10 No 4

18. Do you consider the open-area appropriate to the age of the pupils you taught? Yes 12 No 4

19. At what level do you believe it most appropriate?

Kindergarten 3 Primary 8 Intermediate 11

20. How many roll-classes do you think should ideally be enrolled in an open area?

2 5 3 11 4 2 5 -

21. Do you think that an enclosed area is needed for certain classes or for certain lessons? Yes 15 No 1

22. How suitable was the equipment in your area for carrying out your program?

Very suitable 12 Partly suitable 5 Not suitable -

23. How adequate was the space provided for the activities you wished to carry out in the oper area?

Too large - Just right 10 Too small 6

24. As compared to a regular self-contained classroom, what amount of nervous tension is placed upon teachers in open areas?

Greater 14 Same - Less - Not applicable 1

25. Was greater time needed for the preparation of your work? Yes 15 No 1

26. Do you believe that you received sufficient preparatory training for your work in an open-area school? Yes 3 No 13

27. Was sufficient in-service training available to teachers in open areas? Yes 4 No 12

What type of in-service training did you find most useful?

"Idea-exchange" sessions (8)

28. Please list what you believe to be "plus-values" (benefits, advantages, strengths, good features) of open areas.

For summary of replies see Page 3 of the report.

29. Please list what you believe to be "minus-values" (limitations, disadvantages, weaknesses, poor features) of open areas.

For summary of replies see Page 3 of the report.

30. Please record any suggestions you may have for the improvement of open areas.

For summary of replies see Page 4 of the report.